

Signage in Occoquan

A Quick Signage Guide for Businesses & Property Owners in the Business District



An Overview of the Guide

The Town of Occoquan created this quick signage guide to provide an overview on proper signage practices to business owners and property owners within the Business District. The information provided in this guide is not all inclusive and is intended to provide answers to frequently asked questions on signage in the Business District. For a complete account of all signage regulations throughout the entire town, please refer to Town Code Section 157.300.

Don't see your questions?

Contact Town Staff at signpermits@occoquanva.gov or call 703-491-1918.



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What are the types of signs? And how many of each can I have?

Sign Type

Permanent

These signs include your typical main business sign as well as other signs like menu boxes, window signs, wall signs, and freestanding signs larger than 1 sq ft but no more than 16 sq ft.

Minor

These signs include any kind of sign that is no more than 1 sq ft. These could be papers or decals placed in windows and any other small signs communicating to the public about the goods and services that the business provides.

Number of Signs

- **4 maximum** (mix of permitted and unpermitted depending on signage)
- **Flags do not require a permit, but do count toward the total permanent sign count**

- **4 maximum without a permit**
- **2 additional with a permit**



What are the types of signs? And how many of each can I have?

Sign Type

Temporary

These signs include banners and portable signs and are no more than 16 sq ft and not permanently attached to the ground or any structure.

Banners must be temporarily attached to a principal structure or sign pole. They are made of canvas, vinyl, or any other lightweight material not suited for permanent use.

Number of Signs

- **Unlimited with a permit**
- **For each sign, 2 times per calendar year for up to 20 consecutive days each time**



Sign Type Examples

Permanent



- Pole mounted/freestanding sign
- Not obstructing any architectural features
- Less than 16 sq ft
- Not mounted in public right-of-way
- Permit required

Window



- Window sign
- Not occupying more than 25% of the area of the door window
- Not obstructing any architectural features
- No permit required

Flags



- Pole Mounted
- Not obstructing any architectural features
- Less than 16 sq ft
- Counts as one of four allowable permanent signs
- No permit required



What are A-frame signs? And how can I use them?

Definition

An A-frame is a special type of temporary sign that consists of a two-faced chalkboard sign with supports that are connected at the top and separated at the base, forming an "A" shape.

Size

A-frames can be up to 16 sq ft or less in size.

Materials

In the Historic District, A-frames must be made of durable materials like metal and wood. Plastic, vinyl, and non-durable materials are prohibited.

No Attachments

Other signs, such as pieces of paper or pennants, cannot be attached to A-frames.



What are A-frame signs? And how can I use them?

Amount

Businesses are allowed only one (1) A-frame sign without a permit. Any more will require a temporary sign permit and be subject to the restrictions of a temporary sign.



Placement

A-frames can be placed in front of the business and, temporarily, on the sidewalk in front of the business as long as it (1) does not impact pedestrian or vehicular traffic and (2) is removed from the sidewalk when the business is closed. A-Frames cannot be placed beyond the business' storefront or are considered off-site signage and prohibited within the town.



When do I need or not need a permit?

Permit Required

- Permanent signs (not including window signs, box signs, and flags)
- More than 4 minor signs (up to two additional minor signs may be permitted)
- Temporary signs (i.e. banners); up to two times per calendar year and up to 20 consecutive days for each sign
- Any other sign not included in the No Permit list

No Permit Required

- Four (4) or less minor signs
- One (1) A-frame sign
- Window signs, not collectively covering more than 25% of the window
- Box signs
- Strings or tubing of white light (multiple colors allowed from October 15 through February 15)
- Flags*
- Replacement/repair of existing sign with same materials, design and location

*While no permits are required for flags, they count towards the 4 permanent sign limit per business



Where can I place my signs?

Is this location prohibited?

Good sign placement starts with knowing where the Town prohibits signs based on their placement. When in doubt, other than temporary A-Frames, signs cannot be placed on a public sidewalk, street, vegetation, or utility poles.

Refer to the "What is Prohibited?" section of this guide for information on sign placement prohibitions.

Does the sign have to follow ARB guidelines?

Within the historic district, all permitted signs are required to follow ARB guidelines, including on materials, colors, and location. In general, signs, temporary or permanent, can not obscure architectural features such as windows, doors, railings and other historic accents. For example, the banner to the right is prohibited because it blocks the railing.



Where can I place my signs?

For Permanent and Minor Signs

Surfaces

Permanent and minor signs can be placed on your property via any of the following exteriors:

- Walls
- Doors
- A freestanding structure (such as a pole sign)
- Hanging sign brackets
- Windows (cannot block more than 25% of the window's square footage)
- Door windows (cannot block more than 25% of the window's square footage)

Freestanding Signs

Freestanding signs cannot be mounted in a public right-of-way and must have at least 7 feet of vertical clearance, if they hang over any sidewalk.

Flags

Flags must be pole mounted or attached to an existing principal structure. They cannot be placed in a public right-of-way.



What is prohibited?

Prohibited Based on Materials

- Neon signs (i.e. Open Signs that are internally lit - LED, neon, or other internal lighting mechanism)
- Internally lit signs (except marquees and box signs)
- Inflatable signs
- Animated or flashing signs
- Signs painted directly on a building, driveway, or road (except a singular minor wall sign)



- Feather signs
- Signs that emit sounds
- Banners without a permit
- Multi-colored lights outside the period of October 15 through February 15



What is prohibited?

Prohibited Based on Location

- Off-site or Off-premises signs
- Signs on the roof surface or extending above the roofline or parapet wall of the building
- Signs attached to natural vegetation (i.e. no signs on trees)
- Commercial signs as yard signs



What about...?

...open signs?

Internally lit or neon signs, including "Open" signs, are prohibited. However, non-neon open signs, like paper and vinyl, could be allowed. If under 1 sq ft, they could count as one of a business's minor window signs, as detailed above.

...the overall look of my sign?

All permitted signs in the Historic District (encompassing most of the Business District) must follow ARB guidelines, using colors appropriate to the architectural period of the building. Thus, chosen colors must be compatible with ARB color palettes and, for banners, no more than four colors can be used. More information on ARB guidelines and color palettes can be found at:

www.occoquanva.gov/architectural-review-board/



How do I get a permit?

Standard Sign Application

- Use the information in this guide and the Town Code to determine whether your sign is a permanent sign in need of a permit or not
- If a permit is required, fill out the Sign Application on the Town website and include the following:
 - a mock up in color of the sign, including sign dimensions and color codes, showing compliance with ARB guidelines
 - a photo of the proposed location of the sign, showing 7' clearance above right of way (if applicable)
- Submit your completed application to Town Hall and pay the nonrefundable permit fee

Temporary Banner Application

- Complete the Application for a Temporary Banner on the Town website and submit it to the Town at Town Hall or by e-mail (townclerk@occoquanva.gov)
- Please include a photo of the location of the temporary banner and a color mock up of the proposed banner, including dimensions and color codes

Approval

- Town staff will promptly process your sign permit application and either approve it, reject it (with reasons for given decision), or notify you of deficiencies in the application within 20 business days



Business District Signage General Rules

Type	Permanent-Box, Freestanding, Monument, Pole, Projecting, and Wall	Temporary	Flags	Minor	Waterfront	Marquee***
Duration	Unlimited	20 days	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited
Illumination	Indirect	None	As required by law	None	Indirect	Backlit, internally or indirectly
Location	Wall, bracket, freestanding or affixed to mailbox	See § 157.303(D)	See § 157.303(B)	Wall, bracket, freestanding or affixed to mailbox	Wall, bracket, freestanding or affixed to mailbox	SUP req.
Maximum number	4 (with no flags)*	Unlimited**	4 (with no signs)*	4 signs total without a permit; up to 2 additional with a permit	Unlimited up to maximum size	1
Maximum height	6 ft	6 ft	15 ft	6 ft	Height of building	Height of building
Size (each)	16 sq ft (except box signs, which are limited to 4.5 sq ft by definition)	16 sq ft total for commercial use property; 8 sq ft total for residential use property	16 sq ft	1 sq ft total	Total: 2 sq ft/linear foot of building riverfront width, divided into as many signs as occupant wishes	SUP req.

* Maximum number is a combination of signs and flags. There shall be no more than four signs and/or flags on any one property at a given time

** Commercial signs are not permitted as yard signs in business districts

*** SUP required prior to install